

CRESTED LARK.

Alauda cristata, *Linn.*

L'Alouette à hausse-col noir.

ALTHOUGH the Crested Lark is abundantly distributed over the temperate and warmer portions of the Continent, no instance of its having been killed in the British Islands is, as far as we are aware, on record; this is the more singular, as, from the circumstance of its extending its range to many parts of the coast which are opposite our own, and from its being particularly common in the fields and plains round Calais, it might pass and repass to Dover at will. Our personal observation of this bird while on the Continent leads us to regard it as a much more solitary bird than the Skylark, to which in its general aspect it bears a close resemblance. The Crested Lark is said to congregate in flocks occasionally; but when we observed them they were scattered over the country in pairs, very frequently in the vicinity of the main roads. They may readily be distinguished from their near ally by the crest, which in the male is generally erect; they are also said to perch on trees.

The Crested Lark frequently sings as it flies, sometimes soaring to a great height: its song is varied, although we consider it to be inferior to the well-known songster that enlivens the spring-time in our islands with its cheerful and voluminous notes.

As we have before stated, its range on the Continent is very general, and M. Temminck relates that it is sometimes found pretty far north, although in no great numbers: to these localities we may add that it is an inhabitant of the northern portions of Africa, the whole of Asia Minor, and the high lands of India.

The female is less than the male, and has not so long a crest. It is said to build early, constructing a nest on the ground somewhat like that of the Skylark: the eggs, four or five in number, are of a pale ashy brown spotted with dark brown.

The head, and all the upper surface, wings, and tail, reddish brown with darker centres; stripe above and beneath the eye, throat, belly, under tail-coverts, and the outer tail-feathers, white; sides of the face and breast white, numerously spotted with dark brown, and tinged with reddish, the spots on the latter disposed in the form of a crescent; upper mandible dark brown; under mandible light brown at the base, and dark brown at the tip; legs pale brown.

We have figured a male and female of the natural size.